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By the time this issue of *Alki* goes to press, the bulk of the state legislative session will have been completed. WLA’s Legislative Planning Committee (LPC) began its work in earnest last December, taking an unprecedented step of holding an extra face-to-face meeting to ensure our hearing from as many libraries as possible regarding the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and to hash out likely state legislation scenarios.

LPC co-chair Mike Wirt polled and re-polled public libraries to see where our state stands on CIPA. By December, most—but not all—libraries had voted to comply with the CIPA guidelines. These decisions about compliance generally turned on one or both of two factors: 1) funding, and 2) a realization that libraries have lost the Supreme Court as a First Amendment ally regarding filtering. Those voting to not comply generally cited either practical or philosophical reasons. Some could not justify installing CIPA-compliant filters that would cost more than the meager funding provided by CIPA, while others felt that filtering policy should be locally derived rather than a federal mandate. At least one library system considered not complying because it would have meant turning off their current filter at the request of adult patrons.

I want WLA to support whatever tough decisions library boards make on this issue. However, based on Mike’s poll results and the candid discussions during our LPC meetings, WLA will not be taking any formal action on the CIPA ruling. Detailed and thoughtful information on CIPA is available from the Washington State Library and from the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington:

- [www.aclu-wa.org/issues/cyber-liberties/IF.Homepage.html](http://www.aclu-wa.org/issues/cyber-liberties/IF.Homepage.html)

Now that CIPA is “off the table” as a WLA legislative issue, the LPC would like to move from defense to offense with our state legislature. For the last dozen years or so, our agenda has been set for us by proposed filtering or similar legislation affecting libraries. But now, we may actually be able to propose legislation and get our state government working with us to improve library conditions.

Discussions at our LPC meetings revealed a desire to make libraries safer for our staff and public by extending to our public libraries some of the “safe haven” protections currently enjoyed by public schools and parks. Specifically, we would like to consider proposing legislation that makes libraries off limits to Level III sex offenders (those who pose a high risk of re-offending), to illegal firearms, and to illegal drug dealing.

Some of our state’s public libraries have daily problems with gangs and gang violence. Wenatchee is a prime example. Drug dealing has plagued Tacoma Public, which has spent thousands of precious library dollars on security staff and other measures aimed at combating dealing and needle use in their restrooms and parking lot.

My own library in Federal Way is the site of an unsolved child molestation case. In the fall of 2000, a 5-year-old boy was assaulted in our restroom while his father sat in our meeting room less than fifty feet away. No one witnessed the attacker entering or leaving the restroom, and blood samples collected at the crime scene belonged only to the victim. When I joined the library in 2001, the staff were still traumatized by the event. Federal Way police described it as a “crime of opportunity,” meaning we likely had a predator waiting, watching kids in our branch, and waiting for a parent’s slip in vigilance or lapse in judgment.

At our LPC meetings, we discussed the irony of pro-filtering state legislators spending so much time and energy on their Internet obsession while doing nothing about very real physical threats to library-going citizens. Should public libraries, our staff members, and patrons have to put up with this? Why don’t politicians who claim they want to make libraries safer do something about physical dangers?

Before we propose any legislation, it is important that Mike Wirt or I hear from the WLA membership on these issues. Should libraries be notified when a Level III sex offender is released in their neighborhood, and should the offender be told as a condition of parole to stay out of the library? What is the balance point between a predator’s and a child’s right to library access? Should illegal weapons be kept off library property, or are preemptive measures unnecessarily invasive? Should a drug possession conviction with an intent to
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The Non-Librarian Librarian

A non-librarian librarian can be a library worker that lacks an MLS but performs most or all of the duties usually ascribed to an MLS-toting librarian. Martha Parsons's story of her own career development falls into this category, as do those of the three children's services staff members recounted in Kathy Bullene's piece. Highline Community College student Mike Wood writes about Highline's Library Technician Program, whose innovative approach and range of programs may surprise some of our members. The subject of a second article provided by Martha Parsons is the COPE III conference, the first ALA event to formally focus on library support staff in discussions about certification, education, and other related topics that have heretofore been applied mainly to discussion about librarian librarians.

Conversely, a non-librarian librarian can be an MLS-toting librarian who is working outside the typical librarian's role, or is expanding or extending—or even redefining—that role. This issue's other offerings fall into this realm. The University of Washington again contributes strongly, with submissions by Nancy Gershenfeld, Dana Bostrom, and Zoe Holbrooks. We hear from OCLC's Rick Newell and Group Health Cooperative's Emily Hull, and also get updated on a former WLA president, Cindy Cunningham, who now works at Corbis, an online provider of digital images.

WLA has long claimed to be a big-tent organization. Telling these non-librarian librarian's stories validates our association's inclusive stance. I hope this collection of articles will promote some understanding within the greater community of librarians.

Sheller (Continued from page 2)

distribute on library property carry penalties similar to dealing on the grounds of a school; or, should libraries fend for themselves? Please let me know your thoughts.

What's in a name?

Alki is approaching its twentieth year of publication, and I'd like to celebrate by changing its name to Washington Libraries! I'll be introducing a motion to that effect at the business meeting at the joint WLA/PNLA conference in Wenatchee this August. Such an important change should be debated—and decided—by all our members. If you have feelings about our journal name one way or the other, please let me know, and please come to share your thoughts at the conference business meeting. Personally, I feel that Alki deserves to be read beyond our membership; but I believe its name, taken from our state's motto, does not connect non-member readers to our subject matter. I think a journal named Washington Libraries! prominently displayed on every magazine rack in every library in our state would more likely be picked up and glanced through by library users, staff members on breaks, volunteers, Friends, trustees, plus college students, faculty, and staff.

I was proud to be Alki's editor for its tenth anniversary issue, which we dedicated to intellectual freedom—wouldn't it be great if more people read our intellectual freedom issues? Founding editor Louise Saylor told me how the committee derived our journal's name in preparation for its launch in 1985. Our state's motto, “Alki,” translates as “bye and bye,” symbolizing Washington's founders' confidence that a great state would eventually evolve from the early territory. Similarly, Louise's contemporaries were confident that a great publication would evolve from their efforts. That great journal has indeed arrived, and we should use its twentieth anniversary to share it with a wider audience.

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Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach.
—George Bernard Shaw
And those who can't teach, teach gym.
—Woody Allen

I could do, and did do for twenty-one years. The doing was a prelude for the next phase, the teaching. After two decades as a practicing information professional and librarian, I segued into teaching for the Information School (iSchool) at the University of Washington.

My Life as a Practitioner
In a way, I've always had an alternative career as a librarian. It took eleven years and three jobs in related information fields before I actually had “librarian” in my position title, giving me a job my mother could logically explain to friends and family. My career covered jobs as an information specialist and online database training specialist for a market research firm, a litigation support database manager for a law firm, and an information management consultant before I decided it was inevitable that I should return to school and obtain my Master’s in Library and Information Science (MLIS).

Post-MLIS, for a period of ten years, I managed numerous functions for the Microsoft corporate library. On my first day of library school, I had told all my new classmates that I wanted to work for Microsoft. Despite the specter of eighty-hour work weeks and pasty skin tones, I wanted to work in an organization that had a demonstrated commitment to its library and backed it up with the investment in staff, equipment, and development in library systems.

In my time at Microsoft, I had the good fortune to work on teams that implemented the first PC-based client-server library system, developed the very first Windows graphical user interface (GUI) for a library catalog, developed new ways to deliver electronic information to the desktop of all employees, and produced information solutions in the face of “Internet time.” I managed technical services, public services, systems development and library operations. I hired staff to perform every function from reference to database administration. I worked to expand online services to subsidiaries worldwide. I opened new branch libraries, designed and managed the construction of a new library facility, managed large budgets, and built business relationships with content and tool-design vendors. Occasionally, I took a vacation.

My career progressed logically from online database design and retrieval through information management and automated library systems to library management. Preparing for the anticipated mid-life crisis (which came a bit early by several professional yardsticks, but after all, I was living in a very fast-paced environment!) I found myself periodically examining the contribution I was making in my various positions. I never doubted that I was contributing real value to the organization of which I was part, but working in the for-profit sector for my entire adult life gave me a sense that a time was coming when I would need to provide service in a whole new way.

What, Me Teach?
In spite of my mother’s urging, I never thought much about teaching when I was younger. However, an early stint training information specialists in database searching made me realize just how much I enjoyed teaching, and that I did have an aptitude for it. Even in my management days, my greatest satisfaction came from being a mentor and watching people grow into roles of increasing skill and responsibility. In 1993, I had the opportunity to teach a course at the University of Washington’s (then) Graduate School of Library and Information Science.

NANCY GERSHENFELD
From Librarian to Educator: Teaching the Next Generation of Librarians

Above: Gershenfeld stretches to make a point in a lecture on re-engineering the organization to implement a new vision. She likes to draw on her real-life experience of managing a library to ground theory in practice.

Nancy Gershenfeld is a lecturer at the Information School, University of Washington. Photo courtesy of Nancy Gershenfeld.
of Library and Information Science. It was a summer quarter elective class on the automation of library systems. With true Microsoft enthusiasm, I crammed the class with ten times more material than time allowed, and in two weeks had hauled the students through an entire planning and implementation cycle. While not the perfect educational experience, I did find the students quite responsive, and I left the class each day with the increasing conviction that I wanted to teach.

In 1995, I began a six-year stint as a visiting instructor for the school’s course on special libraries. Teaching about special libraries has always been very important to me: You could call it my personal crusade to keep special libraries visible in the library science program. It is an area of librarianship in which I was having a wonderful career, and one which students coming into the program did not necessarily know about. I wanted to make sure all students were at least aware of the opportunities in this “alternative” form of the profession. To develop the curriculum, I asked every special librarian I knew to tell me what they wished they had learned in library school, adding in my own laundry list. Once again, I crammed several years of material into a ten-week course, but I also learned the first advantage of teaching the same class repeatedly—you get to make it better!

At first I had large classes, often forty to fifty-five students. Lecture and discussion drove the rhythm of the class. Later on, as the curriculum expanded and changed, the class size dropped to about fifteen students. I began to adapt the curriculum to take advantage of the smaller size, reducing lecture time, encouraging more student participation, and introducing projects tailored to student interests. Student evaluations gave me useful feedback on what did and did not work. In 1997 I also taught a course in bibliographic databases, while increasing to twice a year the special libraries class. I loved it, but working full-time and teaching part-time was exhausting.

After I resigned from Microsoft in 2000, I taught two quarters of the special libraries class, then took a year off. I had no direction at that point, but was convinced that whatever was next was going to reveal itself in due time. Long before the year was up, the newly-launched Information School of the University of Washington inquired as to my interest in teaching a class on management in the context of a completely new curriculum for the MLIS program. A new class to develop? That caught my attention. Would I be willing to teach it three times over the academic year? And, perhaps offer the special libraries class as an elective in the new curriculum? Welcome to what’s next. In September 2001, I was appointed to the regular faculty as a lecturer.

Cultural Adjustment

Interestingly enough, I teach a unit on “corporate culture” in my special libraries class, although it applies across organizations. The Information School has its own culture, just as Microsoft, Boeing, municipal governments, federal agencies, and virtually all other organizations have their own cultures. Cultures are defined and nurtured by their leaders, and Dean Mike Eisenberg has worked to create a collaborative, inclusive culture I find most enticing. Every new faculty member joins the iSchool because he or she wants to be part of something new and exciting in our field. We all believe we are creating the path for a new generation of information professionals. It’s a culture I wholeheartedly embrace.

I spent my first year on the faculty listening and learning. It had been important in my previous jobs to be responsive and quick to react, and to attack all situations head-on. I knew the academic world was not supposed to move that fast. Though this new environment didn’t feel clunky, I didn’t know for sure, so I decided I should learn the culture and the way of the iSchool before trying to change the world. I learned by listening intently in meetings, by attending information sessions for students, and by asking questions of the faculty who had developed the new curriculum.

While perhaps the academic culture does not move quite as fast as one in a litigation firm or the high-tech world, the iSchool culture is one that does not sit still. Opportunities abound for new partnerships within the university and outside in the world of practitioners and information users. I certainly can’t complain about boredom in the ivory tower.

My position is that of non-tenure-track faculty, so I am afforded the luxury of focusing on my classes and the students. As an academic advisor in the MLIS program, I help students understand curriculum choices, work with them on their portfolios (a graduation requirement and the equivalent of a master’s examination), provide career advice, and generally mentor them. I am also the faculty advisor to the student chapter of the Special Libraries Association, bridging the students and the professional chapter. My newest challenge as an instructor is in distance learning, delivering a course to students working remotely.

As a part-time instructor, I connected well with the students, but did not have much contact with the other faculty or school staff. Joining the regular faculty has meant quality time in meetings, planning days, and committee assignments, not to mention informal chats in the hall and quick lunches on “the Ave.” I know and understand various faculty members’ research interests and areas of specialization, and the growing programs the Information School offers. This makes me an advocate for the school as a whole with my professional peers, and a conduit for students to identify the right faculty with whom to work to pursue their interests.

Contributing the “Real-World” Perspective

From the first moment I stepped into a classroom, I found the students extremely receptive to my teaching from experience. In my practitioner days, there were times I would rush out of my

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Having worked in libraries both before and after completing a graduate degree, I know that folks enter the field in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. Some people find in their first library job a good match between their personal circumstances and a job opportunity. Others enter libraries as a natural outgrowth of a personal interest or passion. And still others find library work by serendipity. Some build their career on experience, others on technical skills, and some on educational degrees.

Those who work with children in public libraries fit these profiles, but they also bring a desire to help children explore and learn about the world, a passion for a particular service population, a willingness to publicly perform (at least for people less than four feet tall!), and a sense of fun. I recently interviewed three experienced library paraprofessionals who work with children. I wanted to discover how they got their jobs, why they stay, and what they think the future holds.

Rick Mead is a Library Associate IV with the Mobile Services Division of Seattle Public Library. He began working for the system in 1990 as a branch delivery driver, a job that led to a public services position in the central library, which in turn led to his current work in outreach. Rick said his interest in computer technology not only helped him get his job, but also eventually led to his teaching Internet classes to the public. Rick works primarily with seniors and homebound patrons, but spends one afternoon a month visiting day cares. Rick said that his primary motivation in working with children is showing them that books and reading—and the library—are fun. When he uses Barkley the dog puppet to “sniff” out the best book on dinosaurs, he’s not only generating a laugh from a young patron, he’s creating a positive experience that the child will want to repeat. Rick feels that it’s most important that libraries continue outreach services and that they consider outreach to be on an equal footing with other library services.

Monica McClaskey is a Supervising Public Services Associate I at the Mukilteo branch of Sno-Isle Regional Library System. Monica has worked for the system for twenty-four years, spending the last five at her current branch, where she works at the circulation desk, supervises pages, and acts as the branch’s children’s liaison. Monica was hired to strengthen an existing children’s services program at Mountlake Terrace Library, immediately stepping into a programming role when this branch had grown busy enough to need someone who could both supervise pages and perform storytimes for toddlers. Monica said she can’t imagine not working with children, but said the supervisory part of her job could easily overwhelm her time and energy. She sees as vital—both to her own job duties and to her branch—the long-term relationships she’s built with families in her role as storyteller. As Monica’s community changes, these relationships with growing families allow her to more easily assume a leadership role in answering changing service needs. Monica has presented programs on baby storytimes for both the WLA and WALE conferences. Monica said that reaching families in a community requires teamwork of the branch manager, the children’s librarian, and the children’s liaison.

Helen Scholtz is a Children’s Library Specialist at Bellingham Public Library. She’s worked in the children’s department for nineteen years, spending the last fifteen of these in her present job. Helen’s entry into libraries came about through chance. One of the students she was teaching in a continuing education class was a music teacher. She suggested that Helen give music classes at the library after school, and Helen took that to heart. She decided to teach music classes at the library, and her classes quickly became popular. Helen said that she can’t imagine not working with children, but said the supervisory part of her job could easily overwhelm her time and energy. She sees as vital—both to her own job duties and to her branch—the long-term relationships she’s built with families in her role as storyteller. As Monica’s community changes, these relationships with growing families allow her to more easily assume a leadership role in answering changing service needs. Monica has presented programs on baby storytimes for both the WLA and WALE conferences. Monica said that reaching families in a community requires teamwork of the branch manager, the children’s librarian, and the children’s liaison.

Kathy Bullene is a children’s services librarian in the Arlington branch of Sno-Isle Regional Library System. Photos courtesy of Monica McClaskey, Helen Scholtz, and Rick Mead.
education music class was a children's librarian at the public library. The two chatted about working at the library, and Helen applied for a temporary position helping with the summer reading program. She was hired, advanced as new positions opened up within the children's department, and finally attained a full-time position. Helen’s music background, combined with library experience and skills, led to a presentation on music education at a joint Washington Library Association/Oregon Library Association conference. Helen said exposure to books and people are what keep her in libraries—that, and the variety of work she’s able to do. Such library tasks as reader’s advisory, she said, can be as simple as finding a funny book that a family can enjoy together, or as complex as looking for a title to reassure a child that her mother still loves her even though mother and child will soon be separated by a jail sentence.

When I asked the three of them what training and education contributed to their current positions, all three pointed to continuing education classes, computer/technical knowledge gained in formal classes, and library skills and practices learned during internal training opportunities, conferences, and workshops. Commitment to continuing education has led each to be not only a student, but also a trainer of others.

Whether working with children part- or full-time, all three of these library workers are passionate about the jobs they do. All three are positive about the future, though each acknowledges that budget cuts and time crunches could impact service at each of their libraries. All three say that opportunities have grown for support staff, in children’s services and in libraries in general. Helen said that staff at all levels need support for lifelong learning and want to be respected for their contribution. Rick, Helen, and Monica are all proud of the work they do, believe in the value of the service they provide, and have a stake in their community’s future. Their work with children helps shape the future for all of us.

Gershenfeld (Continued from page 6)

office, drive across Lake Washington, bound into the classroom and launch a discussion based on the latest episode of “So, here’s what happened to me at work today.” Some examples…

• Discussing the challenge of keeping a library open and fully functional while all the collection shelving plus the office furniture for about twenty-two dozen librarians was moved and installed in a new facility six weeks before opening.

• Opening a corporate division branch library facility only to find that half the library users are barred by their managers from accessing any of the library’s services.

• Encountering a homeless former contract employee who has taken up residence in the library.

I believe I offer a balanced perspective to the theory and research taught in the MLIS program. Students appreciate seeing direct application of the principles taught. They are challenged by exercises and assignments that put some of this theory into practice. They are given situations for which there may not be established research (first rule of management: you will always encounter something that never happened before!).

The core curriculum of the MLIS program at the Information School is designed to provide a theoretical foundation to library and information science. We focus on a user-centered approach to connect people, information and technology. Teaching classes that students generally take later in their coursework, I find students are interested in mixing theory with practical examples. Hence, I provide two avenues of value: One, I tell them from the practitioner’s vantage point that they will use the theory they learn in their coursework when they get out into the world. And two, I help give them scenarios in which they apply the theory they have learned to actual examples of challenges they will encounter as practitioners.

Now, When Do I Become Obsolete?

When I chose to move to teaching as my latest alternative career, I worried that my value would diminish over time as I got further away from the practitioner’s world. Four years into it, I find that keeping my teaching fresh with timely examples and application of my skills and ideas in the evolving world of librarianship keeps me far from the gates of obsolescence. Basic business skills such as project scheduling, writing proposals, and developing business justifications need to be taught and applied to all forms of work in the library profession. My teaching goal is for students to learn to think beyond reference sources and circulation policies, and to apply to their libraries “best practices” developed by any and all professions.

My alternative career brings me great satisfaction. A student tells me she used a class assignment to guide her in the course of a successful job interview. Another student tells me, “I thought I was going to hate this class, but I actually learned a lot.” We all need reinforcement for doing our jobs well, and the direct contact with students and the energy I share with them in their passion for our 21st century information world, matches any adrenaline rush of the successful business project. Interaction in the classroom energizes me no matter how little sleep I’ve had or how disconnected I fear I might be.

Best of all, there are an increasing number of practitioner librarians and information professionals out there I have the privilege to call “my former student.”
In December 1985, Alki published an article describing the operations of Highline Community College’s Library Technician Program, a specialized employment-training department founded in 1966 at the school’s Des Moines campus. At the time the article was written, there were three technicians’ programs in Washington: at Highline, Clover Park Vocational Technical Institute in Tacoma, and Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane. Clover Park’s program has been discontinued. A similar program at the Lake Washington Vocational Technical Institute has come and gone. Only Highline’s and Spokane Falls’s programs remain.

**A Thriving Program**

Anthony Wilson, who coordinates the Highline program, is a thoughtful and soft-spoken man, dedicated and down to earth. Since the late 1960s the program has, under Wilson’s direction, graduated students who have the skills and scope of ability required to work effectively in libraries. In his second role as lead instructor, he has provided an opportunity for hundreds of people to find careers as library staff.

It may be that the secret of Wilson’s uniquely successful teaching style is its nonlinear nature, as illustrated in diagrammatic form by a mind map he prepared and which he displays in the program’s computer lab. This inclusive and immersive approach to learning offers advantages, according to current Highline Association of Library Technicians (HALT) president Holly Maxim, who says:

Tony’s nonlinear method allows his students to develop self-paced project management styles that reflect the rapid adaptations essential in library technician roles as the scope of their duties evolves. As the library environment changes to adapt to information management in the new century, such flexibility is invaluable.

An average teacher at the community college level is required to teach a minimum of fifteen credit hours per quarter. During fall 2003, Wilson taught either fifty-four or thirty credit hours (depending on how course hours are defined) with 168 students receiving grades in his classes. I asked Wilson how he would like to see the Technician Program change in the future. “Well, I soon will have forty full years into the program myself,” he said, “and I think that there has been room for a couple of more people teaching for some time. I would like to see someone take over the program in terms of guiding it, and run the program with two or three people.”

Due in large part to Wilson’s efforts, the Highline program today is thriving, with enrollment at a high-water mark. HALT, the program’s active student group, holds an annual book sale, the proceeds of which are earmarked to support the expenses of students attending professional library conferences, and a student-published HALT newsletter (published weekly and available online). According to WLA President John Sheller:

The Highline program, and Tony Wilson in particular, have demonstrated a real commitment to the professional development of students. Highline students are always prominent at WLA conferences and events and I think that gives them a real advantage. As a public library manager in the Federal Way area I can attest to the quality of the students who graduate from the Highline program. I often get to interact with the students who use my library to complete their assignments. Tony Wilson really puts them through their paces, and the result is a potential staff member with a lot of practical library exposure. It is always satisfying to see the same faces a few months later, applying for jobs or internships and being selected to work for the King County Library System.

**The Curriculum**

As a specialized training curriculum, the Highline program aims to give the community college student a broad exposure to all major facets of library work. The program introduces, provides practical work with, and skill-tests on such subjects as the Dewey Decimal Classification, Library of Congress Subject Headings, Anglo-American Cataloging Rules and cataloging, serials, and government documents. Program students learn database management, circulation procedures, computer applications such as Access, Excel and Word, Web page design, cataloging, and collection

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Michael Wood is a student in the Library Technician Program at Highline Community College. Photos courtesy of Michael Wood.
management. Digital information access and control basics are emphasized. Some representative course titles give a sense of the rich curriculum offered: Technical Services and Circulation, Serials and Documents, Bibliographic Records I and II, Computers in Libraries I and II, Introduction to Cataloging, Data Base Information Sources, and much more.

Open information access, a subject dear to Wilson’s heart, perhaps accounts for his choosing to introduce students to Linux applications for small libraries. The Linux-based courses demonstrate the potential of affordable and effective open source circulation systems for chronically under-funded rural libraries and schools. These courses are taught in cooperation with the nonprofit Learning Access Institute (www.learningaccess.org), an organization dedicated to developing new technologies to “enhance access to information and learning opportunities and apply them to the needs of the disenfranchised and the underserved in the United States and throughout the world.”

The Students

How have the students changed demographically since the 1985 Alki report? Wilson explains: “The students have always been largely career changers, making a mature choice. We frequently had retired nurses, retired military. It used to be that I only had a few people that were funded by some outer source. Now, I would say maybe two-thirds of the students are funded due to some downturn and have some retraining funds financing their career change.”

All the core courses are offered online. The distance education program option offers students an accredited certification pathway if they are unable to attend day classes. These Internet offerings can be mixed with on-campus day classes. The program also serves accredited MLS librarians with specialized supplemental courses available online in legal reference, book repair, indexing, business reference, and other topics.

There are two ways to complete the program: a certificate path which takes sixty-six credit hours of work and five quarters in school, or the Associate of Applied Science degree which requires ninety credits and two years to complete. For students seeking transfer into an additional Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree program, credits earned with the library technician Associate of Applied Science degree from Highline can be applied in transfer to City University, the Evergreen State College, or the University of Maine at Augusta.

Public or school library employees and K-12 certified teachers seeking a library media endorsement or continuing education may qualify for significant tuition subsidies. Wilson has arranged for the program to offer its courses in partnership with the Seattle Pacific University School of Education as well as through a technician apprenticeship program. Almost all of the courses needed for a library endorsement on a teaching certificate come through SPU at a fraction of the cost of university studies.

Can the Highline Community College Library Technician Program transform careers and work lives? I spoke with Martha Ferguson, who used her Associate of Applied Science degree to begin her career at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library, the leading horticulture library in the Northwest, affiliated with the University of Washington. After fifteen years of satisfying employment she attributes her initial hiring to the training she received at Highline. “I’m a walking testimonial!” Ferguson said with a laugh.
Another former student, Sylvia Curry, became a library technician at Gordon, Thomas, Honeywell, Malanca, Peterson & Daheim, a Puget Sound law firm with a staff of two hundred. She did not arrive without experience; Curry had taken Wilson’s legal reference course. I asked to whom she would recommend the Highline program. “Anyone who was thinking of working in a library,” said Curry. “In my case, they needed someone with some knowledge of legal reference, as well as library tech.” She said that without the technician program training, she would not have been hired.

A Digital Revolution

Computers have come a long way since the 1985 state of the art. The earlier *Alki* article reported that the program then had three working computers (Atari, Compaq, and Utility terminals) with dial-up access. The twenty-four PCs in the current program’s well-appointed computer lab are probably more up-to-date than the systems in most branch libraries today, having broadband connections and access to ProQuest, OCLC, and many other major databases.

Has the program kept pace with the transformative digital revolution in information management that has occurred since 1985? Wilson believes it has: “I’d like to think that we’ve responded. The course curriculum looks similar to what it did then, but the content has shifted under that curriculum. We’ve maintained a vital and active advisory committee, and we’re reaching new audiences, partially based upon suggestions that came from outside the program. Personally, I’ve rethought my notion of where libraries should be going. I’m looking for a venue to work out a discussion on the future of libraries, answering in part the question of why we need libraries now that we have the Internet.”

Wilson has some opinions about the role of the library in the current social and technological environment, and of technicians in the library: “There are some dynamic things libraries could be doing, shaping and influencing society, making it more based upon the full human experience. I’m looking for a venue to offer a course for the people who are running and shaping libraries, which to some extent of course is the technicians (influencing the internal workflow and so on). Back in the days of the mid ’80s and after the Oberg study (1) I think it was fairly clear that technicians had taken over technical services activity in most libraries. There may have been a librarian around that did some of the hard stuff, but basically the flow was all given to the techs. Now, I think their role has expanded into the rest of the service areas of the library. I think there is a role for librarians and I think that they are fairly terrorized at having not found it yet, so that is something that I would like to explore. I’m looking for a venue that might appeal to somebody that might think to receive graduate or at least upper division credit for such activity.” Would this course be a university level online offering, I asked him. “Yes, definitely online. That’s what we need to be modeling: the online flow of societal change.”

To wrap up, I asked Wilson if there is a vital role for libraries and librarians in a post-literate age. His answer was, “I think there is and I think it is in spinning the narrative of the future that we will then step into and dwell in. Librarians are the best-equipped group to feed the re-tribalization of a societal vision that is both truly democratic and reflective of accumulated wisdom. Librarians can be the proactive sources for the evolution of the stories by which we understand ourselves and our world.”

References

In March 2003, I took a job as Web content developer with the technical team that manages Group Health Cooperative’s public website. I had left the position of head of information systems at the University of Washington Health Sciences Libraries after ten years at UW. It was a move that surprised even me. I was happy to be a university librarian using technology to connect people to information. After almost a year at Group Health, I’ve gained some perspective on how my work life has changed and how it has remained the same.

Skills gained in my previous positions as reference or systems librarian translated easily to my new job responsibility of integrating patient education into both the website for consumers and the clinical information system used by health care providers. Although I am working with an entirely new body of information, the conceptual knowledge useful for organizing information (controlled vocabularies, for example) has been key to success in my new job.

An ability to assess consumer needs for information, and then design technological solutions to meet those needs, is another area where my skills and the library world’s focus on customer service translate easily. Web development requires balancing the ‘wow’ of the technology with the reality of ordinary people who just want to get something done, whether that is a do-it-yourself home project or knowing when to call a doctor for your child’s fever.

I have encountered many cultural differences between the university and Group Health. Some of these differences are due more to the organizations being of different types than to my no longer working as a librarian. I’ve noticed that Group Health has a much looser sense of hierarchy. I find that attractive. Unlike the library world, where the division between degreed librarians and other library staff is often an impassable chasm, Group Health offers a refreshing level of respect across job classifications. Physicians are still at the top of the heap, but there is real value placed on the work that non-clinical staff do to keep a health care organization functioning.

In the library world, we blithely assume that information is good for its own sake, and spend more time focused on providing a rich array of sources than on choosing the one and only source that we will offer to our customers. I’m still struggling with the fact that as an organization, Group Health is not comfortable leading consumers to a broad range of information and letting them choose for themselves what they find useful. There are a lot of good reasons for this, not the least of which is the concern that anything presented on the Group Health website could be interpreted as medical advice or as a promise that consumers will receive care in a particular way. But it will take some years before I stop feeling like a censor.

One thing that hasn’t changed is the plethora of acronyms. Group Health even publishes a guide to organizational acronyms to help new employees. The list is as long as any you could compile of library acronyms!

I’m often asked whether I would make the change again, now that I have been away from the library world for almost a year. Some wonder if the salary was an incentive. I can say that salaries are a bit higher than at the university, but if that were my motivation I wouldn’t have chosen to move from one nonprofit to another. I have no regrets about shifting my career, and feel no angst about losing the word “librarian” in my job title. I’m still working to connect people to information, so in essence I feel like I’ve never left the library.

Emily Hull is a Web content developer with Group Health Cooperative’s Web team. Images courtesy of Emily Hull.
I call myself an information professional, but the most obvious way my colleagues can tell I'm a "librarian" is by stopping by my cube to see "the" action figure, or when I challenge them to find some information faster than I can. At this time, my field—technology licensing—has few people that have training in information science, although I hope that will change.

My job as a licensing officer at UW TechTransfer makes use of many aspects of my library and information science training. After finishing my MLIS, I started working with people on campus who had developed new "information assets"—databases, software, methods, curricula, and other information products. Most people in the technology licensing field have hard-science backgrounds and focus on patents. I primarily look, instead, at information which is eligible for copyright and trademark. I call myself an "innovation relationship strategist," and I focus on identifying people's goals with respect to their research. I create "virtual information commons" where new innovation can be shared and where everyone knows what can and cannot be done with this and other intellectual property.

In my work, the concepts of copyright, patent, and trademark are useful tools. I think there are few instances were information ought to be free, and often find myself at odds with the philosophy that argues that everything ought to be available to everyone. But many of the things that I do are not that different from what "traditional" librarians do: identifying client goals and needs, creating strategies to meet those needs, helping to empower people to meet those needs, and generally making information available in the larger information marketplace. My toolset to accomplish the tasks is a little different from that of practicing librarians, and this article will explain some of the key distinctions and differences I have noted between my work and theirs.

Overall, I feel that innovation—at least in its rawest form—it information. I often meet people who tell me that they’ve created, for example, “a 2,500 page website,” and I need to assist them in breaking it down into segments. My cataloging and indexing and abstracting classes help me here. This new information, created on campus, needs a way to make an impact on society. Publications can assist certain audiences to learn and adopt new practices, but most people need a product that practices what a new publication teaches.

Many librarians contribute in some way to a "real" information commons—a physical place where people come to access information and find what they need. This space has tacitly understood rules—for example, that customers can have the resource for a limited amount of time, that there are restrictions on how things can be copied, and that materials are arranged by subject, etc. Other librarians work in a "virtual" information commons—creating Web portals and virtual finding tools, and conducting virtual reference. This virtual space also has rules—click on a link, type in a keyword, print out a resource. This virtual space has more "quality" problems, and resources can disappear when a link dies.

I would say that I work in a "new information" virtual commons which combines elements of the real information commons with those of the virtual information commons. The commons I try to build stem from university research and extend worldwide to researchers with the same interests as UW researchers. Expectations are not often identified in these commons, so my job is to identify researchers' expectations for control of the information and to specify what others can do with the information (modify, redistribute, sell, etc.). In creating these commons, I believe that:

- Free is not always best. That everything we create ought to be free is a prevalent notion that I fight hardest against. Both the university creators and the organizations external to the university often believe that free is best. Yet money is often necessary to support and maintain innovation so that many can become aware of and use it.

- Reliance on fair use should not be an integral part of a new information commons. Fair use is not transferable, and is therefore not a right. While fair use is a defense against an infringing use that organizations can apply to explain their use of someone else’s material, it is not a permission to distribute to other organizations. Information assets developed on campus often incorporate someone else’s material. When the university shares

Dana Bostrom works in the University of Washington TechTransfer Digital Ventures Group. Email: bostrom@u.washington.edu. Web: depts.washington.edu/ventures. Photo by Cameron Johnson.
those assets with others, we remove those elements that we do not have the right to distribute. Even if the receiving organization—say a library—has the same fair use defense as the UW, the UW’s rights are not “transferable” to another party. In reality, we would not want others to build on our materials and share them without our giving permission. I find that many people share this view.

- **Control of information is necessary.** I run into very few people who truly don’t care what happens to their information/innovation. Almost everyone wants to control the affiliation of their name with modified works or their distribution. Innovators believe in the creations that they work so hard to develop. But “solutions” that are proposed by copyright activists to the extremely long copyright term currently in place—such as shortening the term or reducing the scope of rights an owner has—often drive more toward having people give up all control of their works, and this will ultimately create dissatisfaction. Solutions such as the Creative Commons work well if someone knows exactly how they want their work to circulate and be accessed. However, I find that few know what is possible and thus may end up giving away rights to be part of the community, only to be dissatisfied later with the way their work is being used.

Although it can be misused, control of information helps to accomplish creators’ goals. I help people think strategically about the distribution of their work, and encourage them to see copyright not as a weapon but as a tool. Information—at least innovative information that drives toward new technology—has a short useful life, no more than fifteen years. Except in rare cases, most such information will be superseded within that period.

I find that some elements of my work relate very well to what I learned in my core education:

- **Validation of information is extremely important.** Affiliation with an authoritative source is key to adoption of an innovation. Finding ways to validate early-stage information is integral to my (and the UW’s) success. My overarching goal is to release information so it has the broadest possible impact. What’s wrong with someone’s making a little money along the way? Reward those who innovate.

- **Reference interviews always have a role.** Few people know how to ask questions to find the “right” answer. Finding the vocabulary to explain each new technology is difficult, and reminds me of learning the syntax to each new database.

I’ve never had a dull moment, and learning about new technology—the stuff that makes a difference in the world—is very exciting. I believe that information is at the heart of innovation and intellectual property; that intellectual property’s role is increasing throughout our society; and that information professionals, no matter what we are called, have a key role to play in enabling the adoption of innovation.

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**Newell (Continued from page 15)**

working in libraries sometimes feel they are one step removed from serving patrons, OCLC Western staff members feel two steps removed. We don’t have any direct contact with library patrons, but we know we are serving them indirectly.

We probably go to more conferences than most library staff members. In the exhibit hall, we spend most of our time talking with library staff to keep informed on the issues they face in their libraries. We also try to attend as many programs as possible, to keep up with what’s going on in our profession. In addition to attending programs, we also present programs not only about OCLC, but also on related topics such as MARC, Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), and holdings standards. We travel more for our jobs than most library staff members, attending state and regional conferences, visiting libraries, and providing workshops.

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**Who Is a Librarian?**

Although I don’t work in a library, am I still a librarian? Absolutely! I decided in eighth grade that I wanted to be a librarian, and I’ve never regretted that choice. Because I knew that I would be a librarian, I worked in page and clerical positions in libraries before getting my MLS. I insist that the title on my business card include the word “librarian.”

So what makes a librarian a librarian, if it’s not working in a library? Having the appropriate education and experience is one thing. A commitment to the profession and its values (such as intellectual freedom and the promotion of lifelong learning) is another. Active involvement in professional associations such as the Washington Library Association (for example, donating time to serve on a committee or run for an office) is yet another.

I don’t work in a library, but I work for libraries, and I am definitely a librarian.
Not In a Library, but For Libraries

I definitely consider myself a librarian, even though I work not in a library but at the OCLC Western Service Center in Lacey. In this article, I will discuss how working at OCLC is similar to working in a library and how it is different, and I will contend that not all “real” librarians work in libraries.

Founded in 1967, Online Computer Library Center Inc. (OCLC) is a nonprofit, membership, computerized library network. More than 45,000 libraries in eighty-four countries and territories around the world use OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend and preserve library materials, to provide reference service, and to facilitate resource sharing.

Many library mission statements promote reading, free and equal access to information, and lifelong learning for the people they serve. OCLC’s mission is “to further access to the world’s information and reduce library costs by offering services for libraries and their users.” OCLC’s mission is focused on serving libraries so they can in turn meet the needs of their users.

OCLC has about one thousand employees worldwide, most of whom are at OCLC headquarters in Dublin, Ohio. Many of these staff members, particularly those who manage OCLC cataloging or ILL services, have formal library education and prior work experience in libraries. Twenty-one of us are at OCLC Western.

OCLC Western—with offices in Lacey, Spokane, and Portland, as well as two offices in California—provides training, support, and sales of OCLC products and services for libraries in the Western United States. The OCLC Western mission is to provide high-quality and comprehensive support and instruction in all aspects of OCLC products and services. Ten of us are in the training and support group of OCLC Western, a function of which is to provide technical support to libraries using OCLC services. Our group offers career-long learning for library staff members, whom we train not just in the use of OCLC products but also in related areas such as cataloging and MARC (MAchine-Readable Cataloging).

How OCLC Is the Same

Working at OCLC Western, especially in training and support, requires skills similar to those needed for working in a library. As is true for many professionals today, OCLC Western staff members must be proficient with computers. And, like library staff members, we value high quality and accuracy in our work and are committed to outstanding customer service. Trainers need technical knowledge about whatever specialty they are training for and supporting: cataloging, reference, interlibrary loan, preservation, etc. While library employees need a knowledge of their own library’s procedures and workflows, so OCLC trainers must maintain a detailed knowledge of OCLC products, procedures, and systems. Trainers must have excellent verbal and written communication skills in all settings: in person, by phone, and by email and letter. Sometimes I think my job requires 10 percent technical knowledge and 90 percent communication skills. The skills needed to do presentations and training are similar to the ones needed by bibliographic instruction librarians.

The skills needed to do technical support for OCLC products are similar to those used by reference librarians in conducting a reference interview and finding information, though we often know more about our librarian customers than a typical reference librarian knows about his or her reference patron. In many cases, we have a years-long professional relationship with the caller. Even if we have not talked with the specific person before, we have likely talked with someone from that library, and we will probably have some background knowledge about the library, which often assists us in resolving the problem or answering the question.

Like other library professionals, OCLC Western staff members face challenges in finding time to keep current in professional practice. We must keep up with developments in the fields of librarianship, information technology, training, and distance education.

How OCLC Is Different

Although there are many similarities between working in a library and working at OCLC, there are also differences. While library staff members focus on the practices of one library, OCLC Western staff members need to have a broad perspective on how libraries of many different types, sizes, and geographic locations do things. We visit and talk with staff members from many different libraries, but our knowledge of any single library is limited. Although we have observed many different local integrated library systems, we have little in-depth knowledge of any single one. And while technical services staff members...
In May 2003, ALA sponsored the Third Congress on Professional Education: “Focus on Library Support Staff” (COPE III). For the first time, the association was offering a venue to encourage library support staff to voice their interests and concerns. Some comments received from participants following the congress show the profound effect the event had on delegates:

I’m high from the experience and left with a strong feeling of commitment and a feeling of success.
Now the real work begins.
COPE III will be considered another support staff milestone.
COPE III was an experience that I will never forget!
The energy and enthusiasm and commitment to make a difference was just wonderful.

The two earlier COPE conferences had been limited to career issues for professional librarians, with COPE I focusing in 1999 on “Education for the First Professional Degree,” and COPE II, held in 2000, examining “Continuing Professional Development.” COPE I had included the Personnel Stratification Task Force, which as part of its work had revised an old (1970) ALA document, “Library and Information Studies Education and Human Resource Utilization: A Statement of Policy,” by endorsing “the acceptance of support staff as integral contributors to and participants in the Library profession.” But COPE III was the first ALA event at which support staff issues were given center stage.

The idea of having COPE III arose in 2001 in the ALA Library Support Staff Interests Round Table (LSSIRT), which had surveyed library support staff about their workplace issues and concerns. LSSIRT (then) President Dorothy Morgan requested that the ALA executive board fund and support a congress-type event to address these issues. The executive board unanimously approved the request.

The College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, offered its beautiful conference facilities free of charge and provided a setting conducive to sharing and exchanging ideas. Volunteers from the college provided directional guidance, and assisted the delegates in the work before them. The college cafeteria catered meals so that delegates did not need to leave the facility during the day, and the college library even hosted an evening reception and meal in the library building.

Over 150 delegates, including ALA management and staff, representatives from state and affiliate organizations, library administrators, human resource managers, trainers, educators, and library support staff, came together to identify doable and sustainable actions that could be implemented by the association, affiliate organizations, and the profession as a whole. Approximately half of the delegates were librarians and half were support staff. The Washington state delegation represented a variety of library types and interests: Katrina Disbennett of Kitsap Regional Library and WALE vice chair (support staff); Mary Ross of Seattle Public Library (trainer and public library representative); Ginny Steel of Washington State University Libraries (academic administrator and Association of Research Libraries [ARL] representative); and Tony Wilson of Highline Community College Library Technician Program (program director and educator).

The congress began with a welcome and overview from Julie Huiskamp, chair of the COPE III steering committee. ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels followed with brief remarks, after which we viewed a video message from ALA President Mitch Freedman. All the speakers voiced interest in support staff issues and endorsed the idea of including support staff in the association and the profession.

Top: Dorothy Morgan, delegate and former LSSIRT president, and a catalyst for the COPE III conference. Delegates brainstormed on flip charts, envisioning a better future for support staff. Middle: Meralyn Meadows, LSSIRT board member, and the author. Bottom: Working groups, the heart of the congress.

Martha Parsons is a library specialist in the Washington State University Energy Library in Olympia. She was a COPE III Steering Committee member. Photos courtesy of Martha Parsons.
Kathleen Weibel, director of staff development at Chicago Public Library and an outspoken advocate for support staff, opened with a keynote that gave the delegates food for thought. She set the stage for the rest of the event by frankly verbalizing controversial issues that are often only spoken of when one is sure that one is not in “mixed company” (support staff and librarians). She explored the history and background of issues that have for many years challenged library support staff. She told numerous stories to which many of the delegates could personally relate, stories focusing on such things as what we call ourselves, things people assume about us, and other common workplace attitudes and practices that differentiate classes of workers, and which persist even when the stories make no apparent sense. Weibel encouraged both “apples and oranges” (support staff and librarians) to work together to challenge this status quo, and to create and sustain a climate of mutual respect among all workers in libraries and in the profession.

Maureen Sullivan, an organizational development consultant who has worked extensively with libraries, facilitated the main work of the congress using a modified appreciative inquiry process. Appreciative inquiry is a group process that focuses on the positive and encourages moving forward, rather than looking at how things have been done. The delegates were divided into eighteen groups of eight people. Each group discussed how to change perceptions of support staff, focusing on four steps—Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Participants were consistently encouraged to “think outside of the box” and to look forward toward a new and improved future for library support staff. Each group’s “recorder” used flip charts to list each group’s thoughts. Between steps in the process, participants could walk around and look at, comment on, and share thoughts with people from other tables about the notes on the flip charts.

Although each group’s thoughts were saved and transcribed, there is unfortunately no way to capture this event’s spirit. The conversations were positive, frank, and open. It was very refreshing to hear and feel the excitement in the air. Participants were bursting with thoughts and ideas on how to implement positive change that could contribute to libraries’ being more equitable, efficient, and pleasant workplaces. The participants came away assured that they had been heard, and that attitudes could change.

Ginny Steel of Washington State University Libraries said that two of the highlights of the event for her were, first, “the opportunity to meet and talk with support staff from many different libraries and types of positions, and to learn that there is a great deal of consistency in the concerns that were voiced,” and second, “confirmation of my personal belief that libraries need to do more to recruit, retain, and support all library workers.” Tony Wilson of Highline Community College said that the congress “caused a coalescing of a number of things I’d been thinking about as to the future of libraries” and sent him looking for ways to pursue those ideas. For me, the event highlighted something that I’ve known all along: that most library workers are passionate about their jobs, and that we can make our libraries even better than they are if we can find ways to break through the barriers that still exist between support staff and librarians.

COPE III’s final report (www.ala.org/congress/3rd_Congress/) was presented to—and approved by—ALAs executive board at the 2003 ALA annual conference. At that time, the board asked that an implementation recommendation report be prepared, and this was tendered to and accepted by the board in October 2003. So, the good news is that the congress was not just a “flash in the pan.” There has been ongoing follow-through on the creative and positive ideas generated by COPE III.

Just a few weeks after the congress, the COPE III steering committee chair, Julie Huiskamp, sent a “memo of inclusiveness” to ALA staff, divisions, and committees, asking that they adopt inclusive language in all ALA communications whenever appropriate and possible. The inclusive term developed by consensus at COPE III is “library workers.” ALA is moving to comply, for example by adopting inclusive language in the press release template of the association’s public information office. This type of effort can also be adopted by chapters (state library associations), by individual libraries, and by library systems.

We are seeing other exciting outcomes. The enthusiasm generated by the congress does not seem to be dwindling. There are continuing reports of people working to implement action and carry forward the spirit of the congress. A few examples:

- The Utah Library Association is sponsoring a Spring 2004 mini-congress to consider a state-level course of action.
- Ginny Steel, along with two other ARL leaders who were COPE III delegates, presented a session at the October 2003 ARL annual meeting. The session was called “Opportunities for Support Staff: A Report on Recommendations from the 3rd Congress on Professional Education.” See www.arl.org/arl/proceedings/143/support_disc.html.
- At the 2004 ALA midwinter meeting, the ALA Membership Committee presented to council a proposal to offer a permanent lower membership fee ($35) for library support staff. Council approved the proposal, which will be taken to a membership vote in Spring 2004.
- At the 2004 ALA midwinter meeting, the Library Technical Assistant (LTA) Education Committee of the Community and Junior College Library Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) began a discussion and outlined a plan to study accreditation of LTA programs.
- COPE III delegates from all over the country have been talking to their state associations at meetings
and conferences about COPE and about potential actions and implementation plans.

It will be years before we see the final outcomes of COPE III. Though the congress seems to have brought up more questions than answers, it did establish a level of common ground from which problems might be resolved. Some issues raised by the congress will be easy to implement and are just the right thing to do. Other key issues—such as educational opportunities and professional development, career paths, job classifications and descriptions, and credentialing—will require careful planning and consideration.

Tony Wilson said the congress was “an extremely healthy and useful way to get a sense of what we might think of as an ecology of issues from the perspective of support staff and the ALA bureaucracy. Once there is some commonality of view as to what is out there, there can be a deeper discussion of what might be appropriate to do.” He went on to bring out some interesting questions such as, “Would certification of support staff reduce the diversity of library practice? Would accreditation of training programs remove the joy from training as ‘No Child Left Behind’ may be doing to K-12? Is a union-flavored stance better for everyone than a self-policing professional stance? Can support staff be expected to fight effectively for intellectual freedom and free inquiry? Will the library we are planning toward still be there when we get there?” Another delegate has since reminded me that it is currently politically correct to be in favor of support staff issues, and went on to say, “Be careful what you wish for, you may get it!”

It probably goes without saying that associations cannot make these changes on their own, and that successful change will take total involvement and buy-in from the libraries in which library support staff work and from those who provide training and professional development for these staff.

### COPE III Recommended Action Items

#### Within ALA
- Encourage involvement of support staff in ALA and model involvement for state and local organizations. Include support staff in research agendas, create a support staff award, and foster awareness of support staff issues.
- Encourage and market a dues structure that would allow increased support staff participation in the association.
- Increase awareness of library support staff issues within regional, state, and local associations.
- Encourage LSSIRT to monitor the implementation of these recommendations. Recommend that LSSIRT plan to become an ALA Division.
- Encourage widespread publication of COPE III recommendations and outcomes.

#### Workplace
- Recommend that ALA’s recruitment efforts include all library workers.
- Recommend that ALA establish a career ladder specifically for support staff, and consider stronger programming in human resources development.
- Recommend development of model job descriptions and classifications for all levels of library workers.
- Recommend pay scales for library support staff, and include support staff salaries in the ALA Annual Salary Survey.

#### Credentialing
- Suggest that ALA study the feasibility of developing a voluntary national support staff certification program administered by ALA/APA.
- Recommend the acceptance of the 1998 revision of Criteria to Prepare Library Technical Assistants. Study the feasibility of establishing a process to endorse continuing education programs.
- Establish competencies for support staff.

#### Education and Continuing Profession Development
- Encourage accessibility of formal education programs, promote and support more regional and local training opportunities, and establish scholarships, fellowships and other opportunities to assist support staff.
- Recommend that ALA establish a continuing education clearinghouse, and develop guidelines for recommended budget expenditures for staff development.

#### Valuing People
- Encourage ALA and LSSIRT to take a leadership role in developing resources that exemplify ways to establish mutually respectful work environments.
- Recommend that ALA model open dialog among all library workers and continue programming and publicity to promote inclusiveness.
- Encourage ALA to develop a policy to ensure that all library workers are included in ALA initiatives, communications, and programs.

#### Marketing and Public Relations
- Encourage ALA to promote inclusiveness in all public relations and marketing campaigns, and develop a national marketing campaign to illustrate the many facets of library work.
- Propose a regular support staff column in American Libraries and Library Journal, and encourage more support staff coverage in all library publications.
ZOE HOLBROOKS
An Eclectic Non-Librarian Librarian’s Odyssey

I grew up in libraries the way I imagine archaeologists’ kids grow up on digs: oddly at home in nonresidential spaces, unhampered by obligatory social interaction with other inhabitants, comfortable in solitude, mildly annoyed by occasional parental interference. My childhood libraries were small Army base fixtures that housed eclectic collections of fact and fiction. Fiction tended to Westerns, espionage, and war. On nonfiction shelves, the usual encyclopedias and dictionaries jostled for space with brigade histories and dead generals’ biographies.

Mama used the base library as child care. She taught me to read, took me to meet the librarian, ensured I understood the basic rules (no noise, be nice to the books), and went about her errands. Once the librarian was satisfied I would be no burden, I was left alone. About the time I had worked my way through a collection, my father would be transferred and we’d move to another base.

Off base, most small towns had no public libraries. Their schools didn’t have libraries, either. Mama deplored a library-less school and started collections by sheer will: She would donate a set of my encyclopedias to an elementary school principal and challenge the PTA to come up with books. When I protested the looting of my stacks, she pointed out I could visit the estranged volumes at school.

The only reliable off-base option came with strings attached (well, rosary beads at least). Every small Catholic church offered both religious instruction and morally uplifting reading material. To my mind, sacrificing Saturday mornings for catechism classes was a high price to pay, seeing as I lost a half-day in mass every Sunday. But access to a little library—usually managed by an elderly nun—would lure me. I would visit every Saturday, sample the noncirculating collection of reference sets and saints’ tales, and take two Nancy Drew mysteries home. Once I’d worked my way through the shelves, there was nothing to hold me there. But Mama held her faith dear and cherished her Catholic school girlhood memories, and despaired of my tendency to backslide.

Bigger towns and post-secondary schools provided bigger libraries with more variety. I knew I would love the University of Washington the minute I laid eyes on Suzzallo Library. Mama wondered if it was a cathedral. I knew it wasn’t—the UW is a state school—so it had to be the main library.

Once admitted to the university, I spent more time exploring Suzzallo’s nooks and collections than I did attending classes. Fortunately, my choice of courses demanded a lot of library time from conscientious students! The fact that there were at least a dozen other collections on campus—not to mention both a city and a county chock full of libraries—filled me with a possibility of permanence I’d never experienced. It would take me years to work my way through all of them.

My relationship with libraries was never with librarians. Most ignored me: I didn’t bother them and I didn’t expect them to bother me. My brief stint as a library assistant in high school (it was that or four study halls instead of three) was hell: Over my life, I’d acquired excellent information ferreting skills, and on the rare occasion when I felt stumped enough to consult a librarian, more often than not the interaction was annoying and unfruitful. When I discovered the rare exceptional individual, I gladly acknowledged their skill and value.

It never occurred to me to become a librarian.

After nearly twenty years in telecommunications, I was restless for something different. The information ferreting I’d done for my own entertainment or need blossomed into undergraduate credits doing that ferreting for professors and occasional freelance cash.

Wandering through Suzzallo, I turned a corner and discovered the Graduate School of Library and Information Science office. The bulletin board opposite was covered with course schedules, announcements of upcoming presentations, information posters, and of course, brochures outlining the master’s program.

I’m sure celestial horns did not sound in fanfare, nor was the ceiling rendered translucent by glittering shafts of golden heavenly light. Even so, I recognized

Zoe Holbrooks develops and teaches Web technology courses for the University of Washington’s Educational Outreach and other institutions.
an intervention when slapped up alongside the head by it. I took a brochure and headed for the reference stacks to find out just what information science might be and what it had to do with libraries.

Unlike most library school applicants, I wasn’t aiming for a career in librarianship. Rather, my strategy was to polish my information ferreting skills to be more competitive in that arena. Other than the absolutely required librarianish courses, I focused on information retrieval, databases, the Internet, and the Web. When there weren’t any information technology courses in the library school, I went elsewhere—mostly down to the health sciences campus.

I had the good fortune to have Ed Mignon as my advisor. He was tactful in his counsel, forbearing with my prejudices, and generous with his time, knowledge, and influence. When I was smart, I listened well and followed his advice. He suggested I take cataloging. I resisted.

He also suggested I sign on as a student volunteer for the ASIS/ACM Special Interest Group/Information Retrieval (SIGIR) conference that was being held in Seattle under Raya Fidel’s direction. I did. Happily, it was only my second quarter in the program. My schedule was flexible and my energy and enthusiasm high.

The experience changed my life.

Oh, people say that all the time. But it’s the absolute truth. At SIGIR, I met people who had written amazing papers, done intriguing research, and were thinking interesting thoughts. There were presenters just out of school talking about dissertations or projects they hoped to get underway. People from around the world had jetted into Seattle to hang out and talk shop for the better part of a week. As a local and an official conference staff person, I met most of them. A couple of shifts as email lab host provided an opportunity to get into some great discussions.

SIGIR expanded my perception of the whole information universe. Information ferreting is fun, but there’s so much more out there. Back at school, I added indexing and thesaurus construction courses to my schedule. I started looking for database projects in need of student labor. Thanks to Ed, projects were easy to find. Eventually I took the cataloging class Ed had suggested, and kicked myself for putting it off.

In library school, I finally got to interact with librarians. The cadre of library school techies was small, about two dozen out of a student body of a couple of hundred. We were in every one of the few tech courses the program offered and spent a lot of time in the computer lab. Most of the non-techie students had worked, or were working, in libraries on- or off-campus. Those aiming for careers as librarians usually did fieldwork or internships in local libraries or took student librarian jobs. Many already had jobs in public or school libraries and were enhancing their career potential by getting library degrees. Most avoided the computer lab.

Thanks to the required course list and my becoming a student organization officer, I daily interacted with real librarians and librarian-wannabes. Naturally, they tended to clump into interest groups: the children’s/young adult folks, the legal folks, the cataloging crew, and so forth. I got to know a few of them well enough to go for coffee, and a couple well enough to exchange Christmas cards and still get together every once in awhile.

After graduation, I started working for high-tech companies and dotcom startups doing taxonomy work. Not long after, I found myself donating time to managing a high school library and joining an ALA special interest group. Even after several years, this still astonishes me!

American Indian Heritage School (AIHS) is a Seattle alternative high school/middle college. When it was relocated to the Wilson-Pacific neighborhood in North Seattle a few years ago, one of their teachers asked a UW librarian acquaintance if she knew anyone who might want to help them with their library. The librarian contacted the library school, which in turn contacted the alumni. The alumni group decided to help as a community service outreach project. We expected it to be a weekend—maybe two—of unpacking boxes and shelving books. It turned into an ongoing activity that eventually involved dozens of UW and AIHS students, alumni, faculty, staff, parents, neighborhood participants, and the Seattle tech community, donating hundreds of hours working on computers, weeding and developing the collection, attending AIHS powwows, etc.
At the time, I was iSchool Alumni Association president, and getting us involved was my bright idea. I had no idea it would blossom as it has—and I’m delighted at the turn of events. But I hadn’t the faintest notion when we started that it would go this way. Nor that I’d be forwarded the mail addressed to the “AIHS Librarian.” Or would attend faculty meetings. Or would discuss collection wants and needs with students and teachers. Or would schedule volunteers and track the accumulated hours. Or would strategize how to keep the miniscule space we have from disappearing entirely each year when some school district functionary attempts to take it away.

The WLA Social Responsibilities Round Table chair invited me to present at the joint OLA/WLA annual conference in 2002. Their topic was “Providing Library Services to Native Populations.” AIHS is a rarity on several levels: It’s the only urban Native high school in the country. It serves a school district that includes approximately 1,500 Native students representing hundreds of federally recognized tribes. I countered with the suggestion of a panel discussion including representatives from tribal libraries.

On the appointed day, three of us shared our experiences and challenges in a small packed room at the Jantzen Beach, Oregon, conference site. Our audience included other tribal librarians, public and school librarians, a publisher of multicultural children’s literature, and some library volunteers. I felt somewhat a fraud, being only an occasional unqualified amateur librarian, and told them so. They were gracious enough to chuckle kindly. After our presentation, many came up to share some of their frustrations—finding funds, finding appropriate books and materials, and keeping their spirits up.

The American Indian Library Association (AILA) is one of ALA’s offspring of special interest groups. It’s a small group of passionate, committed folks scattered across the continent in tribal, rural, public, and academic libraries and museums. They host an email discussion list notable for its courteous tone and low level of traffic. There’s also a website and a print newsletter. Once I got involved with AIHS, I got involved with AILA. On those days when the bureaucracy mandates that we pack up the AIHS library, move it, and unpack it again (three times in four years), I’m heartened by knowing someone on the AILA list will have good words. When our complete lack of acquisition money means we’re never going to have some really awesome resource for Native kids, I know we’re not the only ones making do with crumbs. And I know that when any of us has extra copies of something, we share them through the email list and through our book swap Web page.

The librarians I met in the master’s program have wandered back to their institutions, new students taking shiny new seats in the new Information School digs in Mary Gates Hall. The alumni who are involved with Native students or tribal libraries keep in touch, share information, and on occasion, share book and material donations. There aren’t many Native kids in library programs, but we’re working on that.

Since grad school, I’ve also been teaching Web technology courses through workshops, the Associated Students of the University of Washington (ASUW) Experimental College, and the Seattle chapters of Digital Eve and Webgrrls. A couple of years ago, Terry Brooks recruited me into the Information School’s University of Washington Educational Outreach (UWEO) partnership. This month, my Introduction to Web Publishing course will start being delivered to Alaska Native students on St. Paul and St. George Islands. Three hundred air miles out of Anchorage in the Bering Sea, these Pribilof Islands are home to small communities of Aleuts. Colonized by the Russians to harvest fur seals in the seventeenth century, these Aleuts have experienced severe political and economic challenges throughout the intervening centuries.

The local Alaska Native corporation is hoping to improve education and employment opportunities via distance education. The corporation is contracting with UWEO to deliver courses, and is in the process of building a state-of-the-art computer lab. We’ve ordered textbooks and software. And shelf units, of course.

There’s no library on the island.

Yet.

Above: Extreme distance education: Holbrooks’ Web publishing course will soon be delivered via the Web to Alaska Native students on St. Paul and St. George, Pribilof Islands. Pictured is St. Paul. © GPS Education Resource. Used with permission.
When I was a graduate student in a directed fieldwork internship at a local college library, I worked with a member of the reference staff who was a specialist in film. Though she had a master’s in English literature and a formidable background in film, she had no graduate degree in library/information science. Nonetheless, she functioned as—and was considered—a librarian. Library staff may have felt that, during the course of her schooling and library work experience, she had absorbed the range of skills, knowledge, and library overview that add up to professional practice. When I learned about her lack of an MLS, I also learned that the library staff and dean considered her a librarian and, if pressed, would refer to her as a “non-degreed librarian.” As far as I could tell, she was treated no differently from any other librarian on staff.

In my own nearly eight years at the Washington State University Extension Energy Program Library, I have had something like that experience with a library-technician-turned-library-specialist, who has risen to the occasion and become what I would call a “non-degreed librarian.” She has learned to do energy research, to answer complex client questions, to supervise original cataloging, to present trainings on the differences among Internet search engines, and to involve herself in various other aspects of the day-to-day workings of our special collections library including collection development, interlibrary loans, and so on. Significantly, she is in charge of the library in my absence. Further, she has become familiar with issues which affect our and other libraries, including intellectual property, trademarks, and patents. She has been active in both the Washington Library Association and the American Library Association. She has participated on committees to fashion standards for library support staff and to discuss support staff needs and abilities to contribute more fully in their libraries. Finally, she truly understands the importance of First Amendment issues in any library.

The “non-degreed librarian” path is not for everyone. It is, to my mind, much easier to attend graduate school (whether in person or through distance education), where instructors, books, articles, classes, hands-on practice, and team efforts with classmates for various types of projects give library science students in a couple of academic years what may take five or ten years to learn on the job. Graduate school gives students an overview that add up to professional practice. When I learned about her lack of an MLS, I also learned that the library staff and dean considered her a librarian and, if pressed, would refer to her as a “non-degreed librarian.” As far as I could tell, she was treated no differently from any other librarian on staff.

I believe, however, that these things can be learned on the job by anyone who is willing to go the extra several miles it takes to make up for any graduate degree not earned. This truly is difficult, not just in librarianship but in any field. Generally, work experience and independent study do not routinely replace a master’s degree.

However, there is a further difficulty. The environment created by the management of any institution will determine whether or not a person will have the opportunity to step into other tasks and areas within the library or information center, to take on new responsibilities, and be encouraged to continue even after occasional missteps.

My own experience as a manager in and out of libraries is that only some employees are interested in taking up the challenge. My own practice is to give everyone a chance. I encourage non-MLS employees to attend graduate school, making it clear that I will support them with flex time and the like when they do. I also encourage non-MLS employees who wish to advance on the job, and support them with higher levels of responsibility (and salaries). Many of us do not rise much above the jobs we are initially hired to do, although we may do them well and contribute to the well-being of our libraries. Some of us, though, really get involved, never stop learning and improving, and are able to go much further than our first positions allowed. That is the case with the “non-degreed librarian” who works in my library.

Angela Santamaria is the library manager at the Washington State University Extension Energy Program Library in Olympia.
MARTHA PARSONS

Another Path to Professionalism

When I first heard about the theme for this issue of Alki, I knew I needed to write something about my experience as a library support staff worker doing the job of a librarian, but I was worried about how I could tactfully tell the story. After talking with both the editor and my boss, we came up with an idea—I’d share my personal perspective, and Angela Santamaria, my boss and manager of the Washington State University Extension Energy Program Library, would share her perspective on having an employee who works as a librarian without an MLS. We have a mutually enjoyable working relationship, with the ultimate goal of providing outstanding library services to our clients. We hope that our story will give others ideas on dealing with what might be considered an alternative path into the profession.

One Non-Librarian Librarian’s Perspective

Do I work as a non-librarian librarian? Good question! However, it is a difficult question for me to answer because it is such a touchy subject for some people. I fill a classified, non-librarian position, and I don’t have an MLS; but were I to leave, the library would hire someone with an MLS degree. But I am still hesitant to say that I work as a librarian. I’m hesitant because I hope librarians won’t assume that I don’t value the knowledge and skills they have earned from their degree work. And I hope that those with a graduate degree in library science won’t assume that I think I know as much as they do about librarianship and the profession. I try never to take for granted the knowledge and skills earned from a graduate degree in library science, and I also hope that those with the degree won’t take for granted the knowledge and skills that each individual brings with them, with or without the “appropriate” degree.

So, you ask, how did someone without an MLS, or even a bachelor’s for that matter, find herself in a position with work responsibilities consistent with those of a librarian? In retrospect, I would say it was evolution and timing. The needs of the library evolved, I have grown and changed, and I happened to be in the right place at the right time.

I’ve worked at the Washington State University Extension Energy Program Library for almost eleven years. It is my second library job. The first was at a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) branch library on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. I worked there for four years as a library technician, with no question that my duties and level of understanding were consistent with those of a support staff worker. All training was on the job, and there were no opportunities for advanced training or networking. But, while there, I got to participate in the implementation—from beginning to end—of the library’s first automation system, which gave me a good basic understanding of one aspect of library operations. And because our staff was small, opportunities came along to do other things such as simple reference work and literature searching. So, the job proved to be a good grounding in basic library tasks and led to my better understanding of library principles.

When I moved to Washington and was hired at what was then the Washington State Energy Office Library, I was working again as a library technician. I did serials processing, circulation, interlibrary loans, and materials processing. What turned the tide for me was the library’s encouragement of and support for professional involvement and training with such associations as WLA, WALE, and ALA, through attending such events as Online Northwest and Internet Librarian conferences, and through trainings from vendors such as OCLC and Dialog—support for anything for which there was a library connection.

Every meeting or training I attended gave me opportunities to learn and network with librarians and library support staff from around the country. Even sitting in on sessions not directly related to my own work has provided valuable learning opportunities that have helped put many pieces of the library
profession puzzle together for me. My years of involvement with WLA and ALA have been priceless and life-changing. (Neither organization asks whether one has an MLS before allowing participation.) I am fully and constantly aware that training of this kind and professional participation are not substitutes for a graduate degree in library science, but they have given me the knowledge and tools to function both as a well-rounded, fully participating member of the library in which I work, and of the library profession.

Since I so much enjoy working in a library, occasionally I’m asked why I haven’t gone back to school to earn an MLS degree. I don’t really know, but there are two possible answers. One is that I just haven’t moved it to the top of my priorities list, and the other is that I’ve not yet become bored with what I’m doing. The only time I can remember being told that I couldn’t do something because I didn’t have a degree was in the first few years of my library career (they were probably correct to assume that I didn’t have the depth of knowledge or skills to do the particular task).

although I often think that it would be nice to be paid more, I’ve never felt exceptionally underpaid in comparison to librarians with degrees. ...The goal for all of us should be improving salaries for all library workers.

Salary levels push some individuals toward an MLS, but although I often think that it would be nice to be paid more, I’ve never felt exceptionally underpaid in comparison to librarians with degrees. In general, librarians are underpaid for the work they do. The goal for all of us should be improving salaries for all library workers.

Standards such as the MLS (and potentially the Library Technical Assistant [LTA]) program accreditation, potential certification for librarians and support staff, and creation of core values for librarianship are all tools that help measure what we know and what we are doing. I understand the value of these tools in making it easier for administrators and human resources staff to do their job, and also in creating and improving the perception of value for the profession. But I continue to hope that whatever route the hiring of library staff takes, there will be room for those of us who take an alternative route into the profession.

I am forever indebted to the librarians with whom I have worked, both on the job and in professional organizations, who have encouraged, mentored, and supported me as I pursued opportunities to learn about the profession, about libraries, and about how they both work.

Join WLA.

The Washington Library Association includes some of the best and brightest members of the Washington library community. In our numbers we have classified staff, trustees, Friends, librarians, techies, students, book-people, cybrarians, artistic types, literary types, creative types and even library directors! We come from college and university libraries, from public libraries, from special libraries, from school libraries. Some even come from no library at all.

What unites us is our care for the well-being of Washington libraries. WLA offers an annual conference, specialized training, legislative support for libraries, a journal, and a variety of leadership and creative opportunities. WLA makes a difference in how Washington libraries see themselves and their work. For more information visit our website at www.wla.org. Explore the site, and make our business your business. Download a membership application from www.wla.org/memberap.pdf.

WLA ... A resource for Washington libraries and the people that make them great!
BRIAN SONEDA
From the Library to the Dotcoms

This article is based on a phone interview I conducted with Cindy Cunningham, ex-president of WLA, in December 2003. By the time you read this, Cindy will be working as the director of media cataloging at Corbis.com, based in Seattle.

Brian Soneda, for Alki: For starters, tell us about things that you have done or things that have happened since your WLA presidency ended in 2001.

Cindy Cunningham: Well, let’s see. On a personal level, my children have gotten a lot older—when I started out with WLA, they were very young. Now one of them is in middle school. That’s been an interesting and rewarding journey. I have joined a nonprofit and become president of the board, and I’m very excited about this organization. It’s called World Corps, and it puts Internet kiosks into developing Third World countries. India, Mexico, Kenya and the Philippines are where we have outposts. These kiosks are transforming those areas, so it’s very exciting. It’s funny because, when I left libraries, I thought, “So, okay, now what am I going to do for the good of the world?” I need to have some sort of nonprofit activity. So that’s what I’m doing.

Alki: Oh, cool.

CC: Yeah! World Corps is suddenly getting a lot of steam. It’s very exciting. And, my work at Amazon has evolved. I’ve had so many different kinds of jobs within Amazon. I have been working for two years with the head of a team that manages the entire catalog effort. The team is called Item Management. This team manages how every description of every item gets on the website and what we do with it. I have been doing a lot of systems performance analysis work. I analyzed all kinds of international data to try to figure out what’s alike and similar about the same product described differently in two different countries. I’ve done a lot of public speaking. I did the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2000 just before I stepped down from the WLA presidency. I’ve been on an international data standards committee. I’ve talked at PLA and SLA conferences. I’ve done a lot of conference- and library-related stuff, which has been fun. I was interviewed by the Wall Street Journal. I was a cover story in Library Journal. I got a notable alumni award from the library school here at UW. So, it’s been a pretty eventful couple of years.

Alki: Sounds like it.

CC: Yeah!

Alki: You mentioned Frankfurt and your other international interests. Do you have foreign language skills?

CC: Yes. I lived in Germany. My Dad’s a physics professor, and he’d go on sabbaticals and we would live somewhere else for a while. When I was 16, we moved to Germany and I was plunked into a German boarding school, so I learned German in a very comfortable, conversational way and then proceeded to study it throughout high school and college. I learned French starting in the seventh grade and I learned Spanish when I got to college because I was plunked into a Hispanic theme house, and I really wanted to learn the language. So I studied all three languages the whole time I was in college, as well as other things.

Alki: Amazon recruited you in large part because the company wanted your professional librarian skills, and you accepted in part because you believed this would be a good fit for you. Were there any surprises either for you or the company?

CC: You know, what turned out to be as important as my fundamental skills set was my contact list. When I got to Amazon in 1998, no one in the company had ever heard of OCLC—didn’t even know who they were. And the first thing that happened was that OCLC called and said, “Gosh, we’d really like an audience with Amazon.” I said, “Okay!” and pulled together all the relevant people and we had a big meeting in March of 1998. It was eye opening and fascinating to me because the Amazon culture of that time was extremely casual and chaotic, very young and unformed, and we were in a real burgeoning, early stage of our lives then. The OCLC people were very buttoned down and came in their suits and ties with their PowerPoint presentation. Since then, we’ve talked a lot more in the ensuing years and have gotten much closer. So, most of what Amazon really has valued and benefited most tangibly from is just that I’ve known people—known whom to call. I knew about the company wanted your professional librarian skills, and you accepted in part because you believed this would be a good fit for you. Were there any surprises either for you or the company?

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didn’t have many experienced managers. I went on to have a lot of big management jobs in the company, because no one else really had that background.

Alki: Did anybody at Amazon express surprise at what you brought to the table?

CC: I don’t know that “surprise” would be the right word. Actually, one of the things I liked about Amazon is that they knew why they wanted a librarian. They had a lot of expectations for what I could do, for what I knew about. Luckily for them, I had spent as much time in technical services as in public services. They hired me knowing that I was a public services librarian—that’s where my emphasis has always been—but I have a lot of interest in and background in technical services. What I realized after they got me in was that they wanted me to know everything about everything. They really thought all librarians know everything and it was lucky for me that I’d had a broad enough experience that I could actually answer a lot of their needs in that way. [laughs] So they just went along assuming that I was exactly what they needed and they knew that all along.

Alki: Sounds like maybe you were.

CC: [laughs] Luckily for me I have a wonderful network of people who back me up when I need information that I can’t come up with.

Alki: Speaking as a longtime WLA member, the Cindy Cunningham presidency, featuring a leader who worked in the corporate sector, seemed to me representative of WLA’s diversity and willingness to embrace change.

CC: You know, I like to think that it was a good thing for WLA for me to be able to bring my experience to Amazon, because I was looking at libraries from the other side. That was what was so interesting about it. I was suddenly inside this company that was constantly being solicited by libraries, and librarians were talking about the company, and I could offer some perspective on how librarians might present themselves better or what it was we really needed. It certainly especially came in handy when we were doing that whole effort to restate our intellectual freedom statement— with my realization of how I really wanted that statement to be succinct and to be clear and have everyone from every sector of society really understand it. I didn’t want it to be an “insider” document. And I think all of that process was really colored by my suddenly being outside of a traditional library setting. You know, I recognize that people have heard quite a bit about me in the last five, six, seven years. Some people I think are tired of thinking, “You know, it’s just as noble to become a good librarian and stay in the same job for thirty years and do a great job. You don’t have to be splashy and work for a hotshot company.” So, I’m hesitant to even suggest that I’ve become in some way a symbol, because some people will resent that.

Alki: Okay. Compare the culture at Amazon to that of a public library.

CC: [laughs] Well, certainly there is a lot of turnover at Amazon, because it’s a lot of young people who work very hard and then either burn out or learn something great and decide to go on to get their MBA or go on for another opportunity. Amazon goes through enormous turnover. There is a lot of change at Amazon and there are a lot of reorganizations because, as we recognize a new opportunity and a new way to try to respond to what the new competitive edge is going to be, everyone gets reorganized to sort of further that effort. Reorganizing within a library setting is very hard to do and often unions are involved so there’s a lot of back and forth. The culture at Amazon moves on a dime. It’s not always organized, it’s not always even doing the right thing, but within six months it will self-correct and do something else. The culture of a library...even though the technology has caused us to change a lot, and librarians themselves are very adaptable in many cases and certainly very resourceful, there is the overall sense that being able to bring change to an organization and have different things happen is a much harder thing to imagine in a library setting. And some of that’s good. It’s a nicer, safer working environment, there’s no question, than someplace like Amazon where you never know who your boss is from week to week.

Alki: Probably too exciting for most people who work in public libraries. I don’t know if we’d all admit that, but it probably is.

CC: I think that’s right, Brian. I mean, I think they probably recognize that this is actually not what they want. A lot of people who are in libraries love the collection. They’re dedicated not just to public service but also to what they’re taking care of. It’s a different relationship to your job.
Alki: What are you doing today for WLA or with WLA?

CC: Well, as you know, I just stepped down from chairing the nominations committee this past April, so for the first time in about twelve years I’m actually not actively on some WLA committee or doing a program. Recently I tried to help the TRIP Interest Group get off the ground a little bit, and I’m still speaking at library conferences and staying on top of what’s happening in general in the profession, but I’m not actively at this moment doing anything for WLA. That may change. As I said, I took on World Corps because I really wanted to do something and feel like I was engaged in something. But I still of course love to hear about WLA and read about what’s going on, see how great everyone’s doing. And especially for me, leaving the library world and going to Amazon, WLA has been a lifeline. It’s been a great thing.

Alki: What can you tell us about the Search Inside the Book project?

CC: There’s a really great article about it that’s in this month’s issue of Wired magazine (1). The reporter really caught the gist of what we’re doing. The Search Inside the Book project was, as were a lot of other things we’ve done in the last couple years, really audacious and kind of crazy. It was wild. I thought it was cool, but I also said in the beginning, “You know, have we considered searching indexes?” Those index terms are very rich terms and it may be that searching inside the book, from a systems standpoint at that time, the way they were envisioning it, was just completely overwhelming. I just thought that if we can’t do this because it’s too ambitious and it’s going to take too many systems resources, then we should really consider other ways to give people relevancy ratings on books. So, I had my doubts. But I have loved to see the feedback. Of course, some people were upset, some publishers of some books felt threatened, but the public loves it, it’s a totally cool idea.

Alki: What is your best advice to MLS holders considering employment outside of libraries?

CC: Well, as I’ve said to many of them, because I’ve written lots of letters of recommendation to get people in and talked to people coming out, because I do love staying close to people who are entering the profession—I tell them all that I think you really need to get a traditional library experience, you need to understand the fundamental skill set that we call librarianship or information science. That means reference interview skills, basic cataloging—the more cataloging skills the better—Web research skills and all that other stuff. You have to know what it’s like to really work in a library and understand library issues, because then you can really say you’re a librarian and use that to your advantage when you go somewhere else. I was not the first librarian that Amazon ever hired, but I was the first one who had actually been a librarian for ten years and had a lot of background, a lot of contacts, and a lot of insights into the way libraries work, and that was a really good thing. I knew my profession.

As Cindy finalized her plans to leave Amazon and join Corbis.com, she noted, “There are many things I’ve done here of which I’m proud—one of them is the high number (about 100) of high caliber people whose hiring I was part of; I can’t help but boast about that, for I am so proud of them all. It’s been an incredible ride, and there are still some things brewing here that I’ve been working on. When they come to fruition I won’t be part of the company to celebrate, but I comfort myself that my colleagues will see the hand of a librarian and data specialist behind these projects. I have really valued my relationships with people outside Amazon—in the publishing and data industries as well as librarians—who have given me and the company support in the race to be the biggest and most diverse catalog in the world. When I start at Corbis, I’ll be working in an entirely new area—image cataloging—and I look forward to the challenge!”

References

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

Alki: The Washington Library Association Journal is published three times per year (March, July, and December). Each issue centers on a theme selected by the Alki Editorial Board. Themes of upcoming issues are announced on the WLA website and in the editor’s columns. Articles should be in-depth examinations of issues of importance to Washington libraries. All works should be original. Unsolicited contributions and off-theme articles are encouraged but will be published based on the needs of specific issues. Submissions are edited. The editor and the Alki board make the final decision on any submitted material. Deadlines for submission are January 15 for the March issue, May 15 for the July issue, and October 15 for the December issue. We prefer article text be submitted as digital files in .doc or .rtf format. Also, we prefer that artwork be well-composed glossy black and white 35mm prints. However, we can accept some alternatives: ASCII text transmitted as an email message, in email attachments, or on a PC-formatted 3.5-inch diskette, Zip disk, or CD-ROM; and artwork transmitted as .tif or .jpeg files of adequate resolution. Please include informative captions with artwork. We recommend that you contact the editor before submitting artwork. Artwork will be returned on request; otherwise it will not be returned. Typical article lengths range from one to three Alki pages, including artwork. A three-page article with no artwork contains about 2800 words. News items about personnel changes, professional organizations, awards, grants, elections, facility moves or construction are included in the “Communiqué” column as space permits. Columns are regular features about library service or operations. Columns are typically pre-assigned to a designated person. Anyone interested in submitting material for a specific column should contact the editor. Alki retains electronic representation and distribution rights to its contents. Alki reserves the right to re-use text, photos, and artwork in subsequent issues, with notification to the submitters, if possible. Otherwise, all rights revert to the authors.
“A New Season”: The 2004 WLA/PNLA Conference

Where can you get two for the price of one this August? At the WLA/PNLA Conference in Wenatchee! This year’s Washington Library Association conference will be held jointly with the Pacific Northwest Library Association. That means you’ll be able to do twice the networking, and enjoy at least double the program content and energy for your registration dollar.

From 11 August to 14 August, attendees from both associations will gather at the WestCoast Wenatchee Center Hotel to explore “A New Season” on the library landscape. Mingle with your colleagues from Washington and around the region, including participants from PNLA’s member states (Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Alaska, and, of course, Washington) and provinces (British Columbia and Alberta). Use this conference to tap into recent changes in the lay of library land, enjoy the newest information blossoms, and collaborate in planting seeds for the next generation of library trends.

WLA/PNLA’s excellent programs, workshops, exhibits, and social events will provide ample opportunity to explore our newest season. The schedule of programs includes:

- Emerging technology and libraries
- Showboating FRBR (and we don’t mean Edna)
- Teaching children to celebrate diversity through the use of literature
- The e-gov boom years: big yields for patrons and librarians
- Advocacy: having high-quality communication with your legislators
- Bringing library content to the palm of users’ hands: integrating resources and PDAs
- Finding the money: grant writing for preservation and digitization projects
- Leadership: a state of the art leadership toolkit, with Pat Cavill
- WALT showcase: activities to energize your training, presentations, programs or meetings
- Basic copyright management for digital materials
- Using Web portals for one stop information shopping
- CIPA and Internet filtering
- Surviving your first year as a library director
- Put your $$ where your mouth is: justifying services, positions, and programs
- Outreach for the rural library
- Digital video in the library: acquisition, management and access issues
- Enhancing early learning: a model for supporting family literacy
- How to write and read library reviews, with Nancy Pearl from the Washington Center for the Book
- Funding new library buildings

Additional events include a visit to the Ohme Gardens, a multi-layered alpine landscape set high above the Wenatchee Valley. These gardens overlook the confluence of the Columbia and Wenatchee Rivers—a perfect setting for envisioning tomorrow’s library. A dinner cruise Thursday evening on Lake Chelan will offer a journey into an unspoiled frontier in one of the deepest gorges in North America, extending fifty-five miles into the heart of the Cascade Range, with surrounding peaks in excess of 9,000 feet. You won’t want to miss an excursion that is world-renowned and has been featured in publications from National Geographic to the New York Times.

For more information about the program, housing, and registration, visit the WLA website at www.wla.org or the PNLA website at www.pnla.org/events. See you in Wenatchee!

—Jan Zauha is PNLA Vice President.

Lopez Island Librarian Wins National Award

Aimee Hirschel, director of Lopez Island Library, is one of twenty-seven winners nationwide of the 2003 New York Times Librarian Awards. According to the Times website (www.nytc.com/community/librarianawards1.html), the awards “honor public librarians across the nation, who do so much to nurture a better-informed society.” Award recipients are “those librarians who consistently demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism, knowledge and public service in the execution of their duties.” The Times received nearly 2,000 nominations, from which the twenty-seven winners were selected. Hirschel was one of only two librarians chosen from the Western United States. Each winner received a plaque and $2,500 at a 16 December reception held at the New York Times. Award winners were listed in the 15 January 2004 Library Journal.
On 15 December 2003, almost 150 civil libertarians gathered at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma to celebrate the anniversary of the enactment of the Bill of Rights. For most of the evening, attendees shouted out their views on the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001) and other anti-terrorism policies introduced since the attacks of 11 September 2001. Responsible for this passionate exchange of opinions was PATRIOT Acts: The Bill of Rights Theatre Project, a collaboration of the G.A.P. (Growth and Prevention) Theatre and the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington (ACLU-WA). Founded in 1989, the nonprofit G.A.P. Theatre was formed to dramatize complex social issues—such as racism, self-esteem, the environment, and civil rights—for schools and community groups.

The G.A.P. Theatre performances continue a long history of political theater in the United States. Throughout our history, from the Boston Tea Party to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, to the San Francisco Mime Troupe’s satiric performances, to anti-globalization puppet skits, and to the current adaptation of Barbara Ehrenreich’s Nickel and Dimed, Americans have used theater to engage the public in dialog about political issues. That intellectual freedom has today become a political issue is no secret to librarians nor to G.A.P Theatre, which made national headlines in 1996 after it was banned by the Federal Way School District for performing The View from Here, a play about gender identity that dealt in part with homosexuality.

PATRIOT Acts was created when Angie Bolton of the G.A.P. Theatre approached the ACLU of Washington, concerned about discriminatory and invasive anti-terrorism policies. “A few months after 9/11, I was trying to come up with some positive ways to cope with the fear and ignorance taking hold of the country,” said Bolton. “Being a theater artist, of course I thought that a dramatic presentation of some of the issues would be a great way to educate people.” The idea resonated well with the ACLU of Washington, which was eager to show people the human consequences of the erosion of liberty in the wake of the 2001 attacks on New York City’s World Trade Center.

PATRIOT Acts is a traveling program of three short skits followed by a moderated audience discussion. Each skit presents an example of liberties threatened by anti-terrorism policies since September 2001. These skits are fictional, but are based on actual events.

The first skit depicts a woman in a hijab, the traditional Muslim head scarf, being forced to leave an airliner because other passengers object to her presence. The second presents FBI harassment of a graduate student researching militant Islam. The final skit portrays an immigration official refusing to answer the questions of a concerned woman whose uncle may have been detained as a terror suspect. After each skit, a G.A.P. Theatre moderator elicits reactions from the audience and leads a general discussion about the civil liberties concerns it has raised. An ACLU representa-

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tive serves as a resource for information on homeland security measures and civil liberties.

“The skits dramatize the human side of government policies for people who don’t personally know anyone who has been affected. And the discussions that follow help people examine their views and learn more about the details of anti-terrorism programs,” said Doug Honig, communications director of the ACLU of Washington.

Intellectual freedom is one of the significant issues addressed in the performance. In one skit, an FBI agent questions a graduate student about his library reading list. The skit alludes to the controversial Section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act, which requires libraries, bookstores, businesses, and other organizations to surrender “any tangible thing” to the FBI if the government asserts it may be useful in a terror investigation. In using their Section 215 powers, FBI agents need not show any reasonable grounds to believe that the person whose records they seek is engaged in criminal activity. This provision not only directly conflicts with privacy rights, but, as the American Library Association points out, also creates a chilling effect on patrons’ reading choices. The graduate student is clearly intimidated by the questioning, and his reaction provides a vivid illustration of this chilling effect.

The program also highlights the secrecy that has shrouded many government policies since September 2001. Section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act, for example, prohibits libraries from disclosing to anyone that the FBI has demanded any records from them. Even after the ACLU filed a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the U.S. Department of Justice refused to disclose statistical information about the use of its new powers.

In the more than two years since the World Trade Center attacks, the public has become increasingly concerned over government policies enacted in the name of fighting terrorism. Over 230 communities in thirty-five states have passed resolutions affirming support for civil liberties and condemning the anti-liberty features of the USA PATRIOT Act. The King County council and the city councils of Olympia and Tacoma adopted such resolutions this fall, joining elected bodies in San Juan County, Jefferson County, Seattle, Bellingham, and several towns around the state. In Congress, the Safety and Freedom Ensured (SAFE) Act has been introduced to limit some of the government’s powers under the USA PATRIOT Act. Along with restoring other checks and balances, the bill creates a special exemption for libraries to ensure that Americans’ reading habits are not being arbitrarily monitored. These successes spring from alliances that cross the political spectrum, involving groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Library Association, and the American Conservative Union.

PATRIOT Acts: The Bill of Rights Theatre Project takes the message of civil liberties to audiences that may not yet be knowledgeable about the scope of government anti-terrorism actions and policies. It encourages audience members to ask questions and to think for themselves about the proper balance between promoting security and preserving freedom.

The audience was loud and responsive on this December night in Tacoma. While a few audience members spoke out in support of the USA PATRIOT Act, most talked about what they see as its excesses. Their spontaneous comments filled many flip-chart pages with a full spectrum of concerns: its violations of free speech, unchecked surveillance, lack of due process and right of redress, and lack of accountability by law enforcement, leading to invasions of privacy, suspicion, harassment, humiliation, and yes, a chilling effect on our freedom to read, study, and hold unpopular views.

Wright (Continued from page 31)

The Sixteen Pleasures use literary artifacts as catalysts for intense romantic and psychological journeys. Then there is D.M. Thomas’s disturbing literary labyrinth The White Hotel, in which the erotic obsessions of one of Freud’s patients turn out to mean much more than meets the mind’s eye. But I’m getting rather dense and dark: How about something for the action fans?

In Jeff Long’s Descent, scientists discover the gateway to a subterranean region which may well be Hell itself, complete with Satan. Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child incorporate all kinds of great mythic and historical detail in rollicking adventures such as Relic, Reliquary, A Cabinet of Curiosities, and The Codex. Alan Folsom keeps things moving in Day of Confession, a Vatican thriller with a sizeable body count (as do Tom Stern’s Vatican Gold and Cameron West’s The Medici Dagger), and John Case weaves science, religion, politics, and all kinds of other goodies into his swift thrillers The Eighth Day and The Genesis Code.

Interest in literary thrillers is booming. With their ability to elevate the pulse and educate (or at least occupy) the mind, these brain tickling thrill rides appeal to a wide range of genre and mainstream readers, and lead off in lots of interesting directions. Try some of these, and the next time someone comes up and asks to get in line for The Code, usher them into the secret, mystical society of readers’ advisory by turning them on to something they haven’t heard about.
DAVID WRIGHT

Cracking “The Code”

“Have you read The Da Vinci Code?” For a year now, this has been the second most popular question in our library, after the less conversational, “Where’s the bathroom?”

At first, owing to a perverse disinclination to read anything so overexposed, I resisted cracking “The Code.” This would all blow over soon enough, and I had lesser-known (and no doubt better) authors to read and share with my patrons. Did I regret one minute of the time I spent not reading The Celestine Prophecy? I ask you.

But as months passed and interest continued to grow, making this title a potential intersection with a vast and diverse group of readers, I relented: I needed to know The Code. Reaching for one of the ubiquitous advance copies strewn across the literary landscape last winter, I read.

What did I think?

The last thing any of you need is one more person telling you what they thought of The Da Vinci Code. More to the point, what titles can we suggest to patrons who enjoyed the book, or are tired of waiting for their copy to arrive?

The Code shares the same twisting storyline and driving suspense of a wide range of thrillers such as Robert Ludlum’s globe-trotting page-turners, Michael Crichton’s scientific thrillers, or Daniel Silva’s stylish espionage featuring art restorer and spy Gabriel Allon. But all those nifty trappings of religious symbolism and arcane, cabalistic conspiracy stuff also place the book in the literary thriller camp, a vaguely defined genre that points to Umberto Eco’s arcane theological secrets that fuel the action in Glenn Kleier’s The Last Day, Barbara Wood’s Prophetess, and Lewis Perdue’s Daughter of God, which was similar enough to The Da Vinci Code that Perdue accused Brown of plagiarism.

In Simon Mawer’s The Gospel of Judas, an ancient manuscript is uncovered that challenges the tenets of the church and the faith of millions, as also happens in Jonathan Rabb’s The Book of Q. Morris West wrote many taut theological thrillers revolving around the politics and darker mysteries of the Catholic Church such as The Devil’s Advocate, Eminence, Lazarus, The Clowns of God, and Heretics, a tradition that Thomas Gifford ably continues in The Assassini. Thomas Monteleone combines elements of fantasy and horror with the trappings of religion and faith in fast-paced shockers such as Eyes of a Virgin, Blood of the Lamb, and The Reckoning. Dan Brown fans should eat up the arcane theological secrets that fuel the action in Glenn Kleier’s The Last Day, Barbara Wood’s Prophetess, and Lewis Perdue’s Daughter of God, which was similar enough to The Da Vinci Code that Perdue accused Brown of plagiarism.

Other engrossing mystery and suspense novels suffused with historical detail and intellectual delight are Ross King’s Ex Libris and Domini; David Liss’s A Conspiracy of Paper; Iain Pears’s An Instance of the Fingerpost and The Dream of Scipio; Phillip Kerr’s Dark Matter: the Private Life of Sir Isaac Newton; Daniel Pearl’s The Dante Club; Caleb Carr’s The Alienist; Carol de Chellis Hill’s Henry James’ Midnight Song; Peter Ackroyd’s The House of Dr. Dee, Hansmoor, and First Light; and Charles Palliser’s The Quincunx and The Unburied. Amitav Ghosh’s The Calcutta Chromosome and Ann Benson’s The Plague Tales and The Burning Road give the biothriller an enticing historical context, while more mainstream works such as A.S. Byatt’s Possession, Martha Cooley’s The Archivist, and Robert Hellenga’s (Continued on previous page)

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WLA Thanks 2004 Sustaining Members
Allen Large, Territory Titles

... and 2004 Nonprofit Members
Friends of Aberdeen/Timberland Library … Friends of Federal Way Library … Friends of Jefferson County Library

... and 2004 Institutional Members!
Asotin County Library … Bellingham Public Library … Big Bend Community College … Centralia College … City University, Tasler Library … Clover Park Technical College, Miner Resource Center … Edmonds Community College … Ellensburg Public Library … Everett Public Library … Fort Vancouver Regional Library … Gonzaga University, Foley Center … Highline Community College … King County Library System … Kitsap Regional Library … Longview Public Library … Mid-Columbia Library … Neill Public Library, Pullman … North Central Regional Library … North Olympic Library System … Ocean Shores Library … Orcas Island Library District … Pend Oreille County Library District … Peninsula College, Glann Library … Pierce College … Pierce County Library System … Puyallup Public Library … Renton Public Library … Seattle Central Community College IRS … Seattle Public Library … Sedro-Woolley Public Library … Sno-Isle Regional Library … Spokane County Library District … Spokane Public Library … Stevens County Rural Library District … Tacoma Public Library … Timberland Regional Library … Walla Walla Community College … Washington State Library … Washington State University, Vancouver … Whitman County Library … Yakima Valley Community College … Yakima Valley Regional Library

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